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In Sonnet Wise

FRED RAPHAEL ALLEN

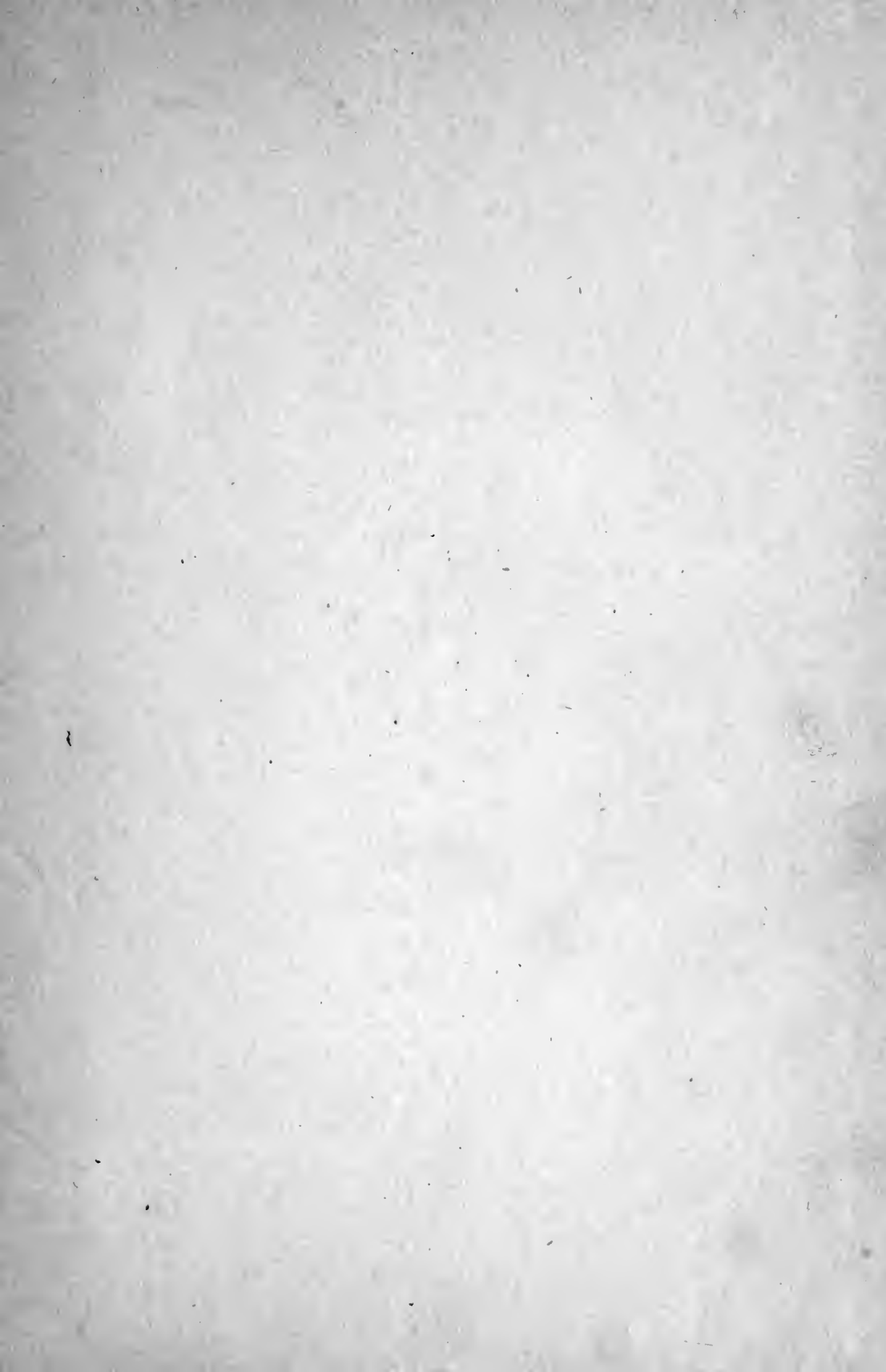


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William Frederick Allen

In Sonnet Wise

FRED RAPHAEL ALLEN



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1911

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Louise Chandler Moulton</i>	9
<i>Afterward</i>	10
<i>The Other's Shadow</i>	12
<i>The Empress Josephine</i>	14
<i>Lucrezia Borgia</i>	15
<i>Hawthorne's Silence</i>	16
<i>Hester Prynne</i>	17
<i>The Reptile</i>	18
<i>Too Late</i>	19
<i>Gretchen</i>	20
<i>The Last of the Druids</i>	21
<i>The Aphrodite to the Dying Poet Heine</i>	22
<i>Athena to Renan the Scoffer</i>	23
<i>My Queen</i>	24
<i>Agony</i>	25
<i>Temperament</i>	26
<i>In the Mirror</i>	27
<i>Individualism</i>	28
<i>Tranquil Eyes</i>	29
<i>Christos Slain</i>	30
<i>Mater Dolorosa</i>	31
<i>The Silent Huntress</i>	32
<i>Thy Faults</i>	33
<i>The Automobile</i>	34

CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Emily Dickinson—Her Poems</i>	35
<i>Wild Flowers</i>	36
<i>Pussy Willows</i>	37
<i>Delilah</i>	38
<i>Sigyn</i>	39
<i>Elsie Venner</i>	40
<i>Jeanne D'Arc</i>	41
<i>Robert Browning</i>	42
<i>Elizabeth Barrett Browning</i>	43
<i>Paul</i>	44
<i>The Water Lily</i>	45
<i>The Emerald</i>	46
<i>May Eve</i>	47
<i>To the Sonnet</i>	48
<i>A May Shower</i>	49
<i>The Catholic Dead</i>	50
<i>The "Chapping" at the Door</i>	51
<i>The Annunciation</i>	52
<i>To the Muse</i>	53
<i>Rebecca West</i>	54
<i>The Fireside Sphinx</i>	55
<i>Thy Sin</i>	56
<i>Madame Blavatsky</i>	60
<i>A Knot of Crepe</i>	61
<i>The Dead Master</i>	62
<i>The Dark Sisters</i>	63
<i>The First of March</i>	64

CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>The "Nigger"</i>	65
<i>Reuben</i>	66
<i>A Sea Shell</i>	67
<i>"Ex Maria Virgine"</i>	68
<i>Old Boston Streets</i>	69
<i>George Eliot</i>	70
<i>Spring in New England.....</i>	71
<i>Rose Geranium</i>	72
<i>Nance O'Niel</i>	73
<i>Sunrise in the City's Heart.....</i>	74
<i>Sunset in the City's Heart.....</i>	75
<i>My Grandmother</i>	76
<i>Mein Schwester</i>	77
<i>In An Old Album.....</i>	78
<i>The Romany Girl</i>	79
<i>The Archangel Raphael</i>	80
<i>The City of the Dead.....</i>	81
<i>Scents and Sounds</i>	82
<i>Laurence Hope</i>	83
<i>Love and Spring</i>	84
<i>A Dead Child</i>	87
<i>Poet and King</i>	88
<i>The Two Statues</i>	90
<i>The Decadent Poets</i>	91
<i>Lilacs</i>	92
<i>The Immortal</i>	93
<i>His Mother</i>	94

CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>The Homely Hearth</i>	95
<i>Mary Stuart</i>	96
<i>Elizabeth Tudor</i>	97
<i>The Voice of Sex</i>	98
<i>"In that Old Ancient Time"</i>	101
<i>A Day in Spring</i>	102
<i>"When in the Silence of Thy Last Despair"</i> ..	103
<i>The Lone Hollow</i>	104
<i>Paganini's Violin</i>	105
<i>To My Mother</i>	106
<i>To An Old Poet, Who Fears Death</i>	107
<i>Father</i>	108
<i>An Old Toiler</i>	109

IN SONNET WISE

LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON

IN MEMORIAM

Maker of poets! Poet crowned, and friend!
The silence fills your erst familiar place;
The gentle presence of your woman's grace—
No more to mortal circles you may lend.
Oh if there be some poem-gift to send
From vague dream-vastness of untravelled space—
I pray you measure with an angel's pace,
Through cloud and night your radiant star-path
 wend!

I beg you, stoop from your sun-perfect sphere—
To list the plainting of an earthly lute;
Behold a wreath whose only worth is love!
Heaven has not changed you, you, so gracious here—
No death can make your voice of summer, mute;
Speak, and accept the songs I waft above!

AFTERWARD

I

What is my beauty now? The lips that praised
My smile, my glance, are silent evermore!
We traced in sand; the heedless wave erased
Our slight love-markings from the faithless shore.
Am I so changed to him, as he to me?
Am I too warm for his cold arms to clasp?
Would he still seize me, with the lover's grasp,
And shake the love-blooms from the marriage tree?
How is it with the dead? Is love a dream,
Forgotten, when the phantom stands beside
The sea of death, and looks across the tide
Wistful to know how love and lovers seem?
I cannot coax him o'er that hungry wave;
He loved my beauty, yet it may not save!

II

Did soul touch soul, I wonder? Do I crave
The kiss thou gavest with thy power of fire?
It stifles me! Thine arms fold in the grave,
And yet they yearn to close me with desire!
Oh love, with impulse of the untamed horse
On boundless plains, thou art a ghoul to me!
Thine was no soul, content to run its course
Content in God, meek in eternity!
I feel thee hovering in a vampire form—
And breathing kisses on my face and hair!
I dread thee, as I dread the sudden storm
That chills the mildness of the summer air!
Torments of fancy! Yet I would life's powers
Had taught us God to bless this love of ours!

THE OTHER'S SHADOW

I

The other woman's shadow stands between—
That one who stabbed your heart, and maimed your
soul!

I would be blinder than the earth-hid mole
Did I not see her mocking, scornful mien!
She points at me like an adulterous queen
And sneers, "I had him first; where then, wert
thou?"

Could I place orange blossoms on my brow,
Forgetful, henbane on her lips had been?
Would not she sit between us at the board
Or wave me hence when I lay in your arms?
Would not her shadow laugh, if I should weep?
Nay love, I take you for my chosen lord—
But would the white flesh of her wanton charms
Were hidden from us in the final Sleep!

II

But stay, I see the sorrow in your eyes!
Love I shall heal, where she but lived to kill!
Let vanities of earth-life claim her still—
My love shall make me wifely kind and wise!
Love, I shall pray the glad suns on you rise!
Love, I shall shape the labour of my hands
To bless the highways of your life's demands—
That she may greet us with dismayed surprise!
Come, let us face her! I shall fear no more!
Let her be dead, who never lived to me;
Let her be silent, when we speak and kiss!
Perchance, hereafter, on the blessed shore
Her meek-eyed ghost may find us, chaste and free—
And give us greeting in our lovers' bliss!

THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE

No ill-timed sneer of this irreverent day
Can smirch the lustre of thy matron's robe;
No jackal orb, adrift o'er history's globe,
Can turn thy star from its empyrean way.
Think they, these snarlers, to bedim thy sway
And crown the kraken beast, Napoleon
By whining slurs of wrongs, thy hands had done—
True light who raised him, by thy guiding ray?
Nay, had thy heart been black instead of sad—
It had not worn his colour, lecherous red;
But thou wert pure, fair woman—more than queen!
Each petty folly censured; wilful-mad
Are those dog-scribblers who would bow thy head
And seize *his* pitch to soil thine honour's sheen!

LUCREZIA BORGIA

Praise God a voice is heard—a random voice
To breathe denial of thy lusts and crimes;
Three Borgias were ye—why should we take choice
Of thee, as scapegoat, of old, evil times?
Thou wert a woman, Flora fair, we read—
And marred by faults we fain would never speak.
Thou wert not guilty of each bloody deed
Old wives' decrees have branded on thy cheek!
A Jezebel, a poisoner, wert thou
If rote and drama flame the rightful word;
A traitress, false to God in every vow—
A name accurséd, where it chance, was heard!
Thus speaks untruth; howbeit, we shall know .
The Last Great Day, why men have judged thee so!

HAWTHORNE'S SILENCE

The babblers chattered like a flock of birds
Who spy a field of ripe and yellow corn.
Amid the shower of smiles and pleasant words,
I saw him stand apart—the Mystic Born!
His was a Silence, I had never known!
The fair sky of my sunny world turned gray;
He heard far voices, where he stood, alone—
And saw dark forms outlined against the day.
Where was the world those deep eyes searched and
knew?
Who spoke to him in that far Silence land?
The noisy room seemed misty to my view,
And soul-imploring, I stretched forth my hand.
He looked—he smiled! His Silence was mine own;
And I stood with him in the skies—alone!

HESTER PRYNNE

The faultless concept of a master brain,
Who follows soul dictates, is nobler far—
Than manikin who breathes, but knows no star,
And lives as swine, in sluggish torpor, lain.
This woman, Hester Prynne; among the train
Of glorious penitents great Göethe saw—
She moves the holier, for her soul's one flaw—
And as the still sea chants the raptured strain.
When thoughtful footsteps turn by ice-bound streams
To list the pines sing to the wailing wind—
The echo of her presence fills the air.
Her steadfast eyes shine in the heart's high dreams;
She treads by ocean wastes with wet rocks lined—
Hands clasped on bosom, spotless pure and fair.

THE REPTILE

What third world bore the reptile? Why has man
Instinctive, nurtured hatred to the race?
Are they the offshoots from some vanished span
When God and Death fought on the waters' face?
The watchful tortoise, still and deadly snake—
The wary-creeping, cruel-souled crocodile—
All bear the impress of an antique make
Of worlds and strata older than the Nile!
What horrid beauty marks the serpent's wrath?
Behold the wisdom in those sleepless eyes!
On foot, on belly, lo the reptile's path
Seems destined, isolate, for death's surmise.
Yet birds leaped from them! In our walks we trace
The reptile's brand in human hand and face!

TOO LATE

The kisses you denied my whole life long—
You leave with slow tears on my ice-cold brow!
Oh, tardy love, why pledge affection now?
Why ask the silent bird for life and song?
It was your duty, say you, to the throng—
You call the world, to love, and never speak!
But now, when Death's white roses frost my cheek—
You sob in broken whispers, "I was wrong!"
This heart wild for you in life's sad days,
Now dead and done as e'en my love and I;
I am most deaf to life and lover's ways,
And coldly lie here, who was loath to die.
I may not heed you; your's the sorry fate
To cherish soul and heart, too late, too late!

GRETCHEN

Poor maid to clasp the jewels to her breast,
When flower jewels sparkled at her feet!
Weak girl to deem their heavy weight the best,
When tendrils brushed her forehead, white and
sweet!

How changed was all her world in one sad hour!
So pure, she had no need to ask her shrift—
Then, withered like some frail rose in a bower—
Cast in the stream 'mid spreading weeds to drift!
For one mad sin, a Brocken of despair
Seized brain and heart; and by her lover's kiss
Soul torture followed, till the cell's foul air
Led her to angels' song from serpents' hiss!
Yet Gretchen, penitent, did so believe
That Faust was saved by clinging to her sleeve!

THE LAST OF THE DRUIDS

He saw his ancient faith die in the groves;
The great tree temples decked with Christian
wreaths.

He wandered, as a lawless star that roves
Unmindful of the moon, who light bequeaths.
At last, grown old, his hoar beard on his breast,
His fellows dead, their mandates disobeyed—
He sought his runes to find some charm for rest,
That he might face the future unafraid.
The while he mused, beneath the moss-crowned oak,
The fearless Patrick passed, and gave his hand.
His voice said, "Brother!" and the stern heart
broke;

The Druid knew a God had blessed his land!
And Patrick prayed for him who loved his race—
That he might know the Father, face to face.

THE APHRODITE TO THE DYING POET HEINE

Ah, offspring of the long-dead Pagan age,
Why beg of me whose hands must be my eyes?
How can I help thee to discern one page
Of Jove's old book, writ when the gods were wise?
Poor, crippled, halt—how can I give thee power?
The gods are mute; I live in silent shame.
Thou whisperest "Death!" thou withering poppy
flower—
I cannot aid, though thou hast praised my name.
My bones are weary of this lonely fate—
Speak not of passing to the loathsome grave!
I tell thee, fool, thy fears have made thee prate—
Walpurgus presbyter, know—I cannot save!
I knew Hellene—harlot love I knew—
That hast thou known—now wear thy crown of
rue!

ATHENA TO RENAN THE SCOFFER

I was the Shadow of that Mighty One—
Thou wouldst not know—the lowly Nazarene!
I was the Moon, but, fool, He is the Sun—
The life that decks the Pagan fields with green!
I am not dead! I lived as e'er I lived
The Perfect Wisdom of a little day;
'Tis not by me the thoughts of men are sieved—
But by that One, who was, and is alway!
I sprang, full-armed, from Zeus' half-mighty brain—
A miracle; behold the Nazarene!
A Babe in Mary's arms in slumber lain—
That Mary who is now All-Heaven's Queen!
Lo He, the Ever-Child, the God in man—
Will tell thee, wastrel, all of thy brief span!

MY QUEEN

“Love Loyal to the least wish of the Queen”;
So let me be, but to no Guinevere,
Whose heart’s warm rose absorbed her conscience’s
tear—

Till sin defiled her bower’s lily sheen.
My sovereign is a lady robed in green,
Who yields me simples, made of herbs and sleep.
She leads me where the woodland heart is deep—
And shows me oft, the grave rest of her mien.
I am most loyal, giving heart and love—
And binding years as strings to chant her praise,
Knowing, at last, she calls me to her arms.
My lady dwells where flies the greenwood dove;
More fair than mortal mistress, lo, her ways
Are songs and smiles of forest spells and charms!

AGONY

A canvas glimpse, 'twill haunt me all my days;
A mother-sheep, amid the whirling snow—
Her dead lamb at her feet; whilst, eyes a-glow—
With whetted beaks, the crows, from forest ways,
Fix the small carcass with expectant gaze.
They wait in silence; her despairing cries
Shrill through the night; with pitiless surmise—
They watch till death her hapless eyes shall glaze.
A picture bit! But still I feel the snow—
I hear the shrieks; in fancy I can see
The blood chain, ring as grim and cold as fate.
What sword pierced through her breast, before the
 glow
Of those red eyes! Oh, well-named “Agony”—
The dumb, maternal soul, that bade her wait!

TEMPERAMENT

Alas, poor word! So mis-applied, abused
By every selfish coward drunk with self!
Sad prisoner to sin, now be thou loosed—
Sleep, till thou wake to happy lease of health!
Thou art the veil of every petty vice—
The glib excuse of rogue and dilettant;
Behold a carrion, stinking, reeked in lice—
And thou art fair cloak for this devil's grant!
Thy primal mission seeks Elysian air—
Where hearts incarnate as translucent gems;
But lo, lust drags thee to its siren's lair—
Where nightshade mongrel son the orchid's stems!
I fain would echo Madame Roland's cry—
And scourge them hence who sin, and smoothly lie!

IN THE MIRROR

Her glass in hand—her faithful plane of glass,
A face she sees; not her's, who therein looks—
But oh, a face that gazed in running brooks—
The rose-pink skin of sonsie country lass!
Her ears once heard the feet of summer pass—
The face was fair with daisy pastured health;
A dancing eye, her hair her only wealth—
Her one great joy the skylark's tribute Mass!
Long doth she look, this woman, worn and sad,
At that young face, once her's by dower right
Of wild-sown meadow, stream, and wooded hill.
Alas, what pain to scan the charm she had—
Dimmed by the street and ghastly taper light;
Long hath she known how sin, young grace doth kill!

INDIVIDUALISM

My life came as a gift—a perfect gift;
I cannot, careless, toss this gift aside—
Unless I make the puling coward's shift,
And go a traitor o'er the dark divide.
What bodes this gift? Say, what its golden use?
Is it the knife to kill, or balm to save?
Is it my right to twist myself the noose—
If my desire should beck me to the grave?
Is it my right to trample on those hearts—
I was commanded by my God to love?
Should I dance Carmagnole by rattling carts,
My "right" had filled? Would that win peace
above?
Is my first duty to my poor self? No!
No reckoning but the monster's, metes life so!

TRANQUIL EYES

In those soft lakes of hazel, peace is seen ;
Yet that pure soul was oft times torn and stirred
By time's distress and hatred's javelin word—
The crown of sorrow on that brow hath been.
Now, in these twilight hours, she dwells serene
By stilly waters ; in those trustful eyes—
Behold the light, the day sheds when it dies—
The solemn joy of sunset's farewell sheen.
The flush of youth knows not this fearless peace—
The silver flecks the hair above those eyes ;
The river nears the vastness of the sea.
Soon Death shall give her victory of release—
The soft orbs mark the death-bird where it flies—
The calm lips whisper, "Rest! Eternity!"

CHRISTOS SLAIN

Forgive me, Christos, if an act of mine
Hath nailed Thee to this day's memorial Cross.
Forgive me when I spurn the galléd wine,
And sorrow for an idle bauble's loss.
What are my mortal tears to tears of Thine?
Have I the burden of an evil world?
When was I raised against the sky's gray line?
When was I to the blood-hell, blameless, hurled?
Oh Perfect Christos! Pity and forgive!
Thy dying eyes have pierced my bosom's core;
Oh wounded hands outstretched to bid me live—
Forgive that I have failed to love Thee more!
If I have bound Thee on the bitter Cross,
Be mine the thorny crown, and mine the loss!

MATER DOLOROSA

Hush! Here is grief the like was never seen!
She weeps who is the purest of the earth!
A sorrowing Mother is the Heavens' Queen—
Bound to His flesh in God-mysterious birth!
Oh can those streaming eyes be Her's who yearned
Above a gentle Babe among the hills?
Her dry lips move—Her Son with thirst is burned,
Her vision shows Her, mock of gushing rills!
All, all, is His; His Mother's prayers can move
The Kingly Victim for ungrateful man;
Yet, here She shares His Martyrdom of love
And feels hell's torments in a moment's span.
Oh Mary of the Dolours, let me pray
Beside Thee to my Lord, this awful day!

THE SILENT HUNTRESS

Does Death hunt with you on those silent shores,
You, who have roamed the woods to horn and
hound?

Did not your strong arms seize the boatman's oars,
When that dim bark passed from my sight and
sound?

Oh goddess huntress! Woman, brave as true—
Who met with Death and smiled full in his face!
What warrior phantom roves those Woods with
you?

What game is yours in that far, noiseless chase?
Your supple hands—what bridle do they grasp?
Who rides beside you on those endless miles?
Who saw the coffin hinge, at length unclasp—
And sunned him in the glad light of your smiles?
Oh great and strong! My Amazon, my soul!
Cannot your voice ring o'er the tide's dark roll?

THY FAULTS

As time with kindly hands would fain conceal
With ivy mantles, boss of ruined tomb—
So, in the narrows of my spirit's gloom,
I gloss the faults thy impulse would reveal.
Yet, stern convictions, born of justice, steal
That as the tomb is but the tomb, despite
Its ivy cover, so no haze of light
Can prove the darkness of thy grain unreal!
The bird, created for the orchard peace,
Who nested mid the thick sprays on the tomb—
Would it be mad, or only gently kind?
I know thee! Yet I seek no last release;
I only pray some chance of life and bloom
In me, may call to sight thy soul, now blind!

THE AUTOMOBILE

Mis-shapen monster of a misprised age!
I loiter with the summer down the lane
As care-free as the bird loosed from the cage—
When you sweep on me like a plague's foul bane!
Oh, Mother Nature, think! The mammoth forms
Of pterodactyl, of dioynasar—
Those creatures bred in rock-wombs, mid thy
 storms—
Is this their offspring, bastard of their core?
I strive in vain to set my soul in touch
With thee, Green Mother; I can only shrink
In flesh and spirit from this saurian clutch;
I lose thy wood-scents in this man-made stink!
I must plunge in thy deeps to catch again
Thy charm, dispelled by this rank thing of Cain!

EMILY DICKINSON—HER POEMS

Why should you stoop to me from that far sphere
Your spirit measures with unfaltering tread?
What soul am I, that you, th' exalted dead
Should leave your star to share my vigils here?
I laid no laurel tributes on your bier;
I know you not, in those, your earthly days;
Yet you walk with me in the woodwild maze—
And speak to me, beside the tranquil mere,
Your soul has nasence in your poet's book—
You seem so real, I almost feel your hand
Steal into mine, the while your lines I read.
You, in this life dreamed in a quiet nook,
But you have led me to Parnassus' land—
Where guardian muses serve the poet's need!

WILD FLOWERS

I like those flowers best, whose sweetness lives
Defiant of the winter's killing power.
The staunch field fellows, whom wise Nature gives
A chosen Asgard in her country bower.
No dainty segments of the city's skill
Are those brave rustics, strong and sturdy-veined;
They hide their heads in philosophic will
When coarse winds roar, and fields are brown be-
stained.
These are the symbols of the hearts that hope—
The optimists that strive, and dare, and do;
They blow, they dance, a white-lined, gold-eyed
rope,
The summer's hour, reliant, smiling, true!
No fragile rose may be so dear to God
As these wild gypsies of the untilled sod!

PUSSY WILLOWS

The March is sullen ; but he leaves one gift
To prove him generous-hearted, not a churl.
Impatiently he tears a snow-thick drift,
And scatters, careless, drops of rose and pearl.
He meditates—shall winter claim his heart?
He mutters to himself, and bare trees stir.
Then he recalls, he owes fair spring his part,
And grimly smiling, gives these buds of fur.
Sired by winter, damed of murky days—
They cling persistent to the parent stem ;
They purr as March strides through the curling
 haze ;
He nods, in passing, gruff farewell to them.
Thus Pussy Willows cuddle in the woods
To show the March a friend, despite his moods.

DELILAH

Why do we call thee traitress, that a fool
Lay on thy breast and told thee of his strength?
His was the sin, who broke th' Almighty's rule
And slaved his people for a hapless length.
But thou, who called God, Dagon, hands of scorn
Have painted thee through ages as a bawd!
Did not thy bosom know its secret thorn
To lure a giant dolt with trick and fraud?
True, thou wert fair, but in thy woman's soul
Deep love was strong for thine old nation's pride;
Thy warrior heart burned as a livid coal,
And thou to Philista wert plighted bride!
Why execrate thee? Thine was mind and power;
Thou of thy people, wert the perfect flower!

SIGYN

She never did a wrong; but evil casts
Its fatal shadow on her stricken heart;
Her husband, Loki, works his god-doomed part
Bound to the rock, while time's appointment lasts.
Above him hangs a serpent, mid the vasts
Of fissured rocks; its eager fangs displace
The angry venom on his upturned face—
But she, t'avert his doom, bides endless fasts.
Within a leaf-twined cup the venom falls—
And her sad eyes are evermore upraised
Imploring grace for him who knew not good.
Ever she sits amid the wild birds' calls—
Faithful to him, her pure soul who abraised;
Eternal martyr of true womanhood.

ELSIE VENNER

God sets some souls a sorry task from birth;
The pre-ordained, who suffer in the womb.
Theirs is the loss from cradle to the tomb;
Not theirs the laurels of th' applauding earth.
Solitude claims them from the rounds of mirth;
Ishmaelites, they walk where Nature broods
O'er rocks she gashed, in vengeance of her moods;
Sombre and silent, they wander in dearth.
Ever they raise their eyes in deadly hate;
Like basilisks they poison with their rage;
Mutely they seek for a soul, dumb-defined.
Sometime God looses the chain of their fate;
Somewhere they meet with the best of their age;
Love, at the last, lifts the cloud from the mind!

JEANNE D'ARC

God spoke to her; the loftiest of His host
Came down to bear her spirit company.
Our Lady gave her gifts of chastity,
And for her spouse she had the Holy Ghost.
She drove iron England from the Frankish coast—
And with her peasant vision, turned the tide
Of time and history, from the Briton side
To France, where Fate decreed its mileage post.
Yet envious England led her to the flames;
And slothful France beheld her saviour die,
And turned her face unwitting—gratitude!
But La Pucelle among the deathless names
Stands foremost in the annals of the sky;
“All perfect thou, with every glance endued”!

ROBERT BROWNING

Thou wert the Piper; and thy strange-blent tune
Called vermin forms to perish in the wave;
The world, the Hamlin, that thy reed might save
If it so chose to know the Sun at noon!
Again thy pipe called, that the freed might hear;
And waiting souls, who were as children wise—
Listened rejoicing, followed without fear,
And through the hillcleft saw the bending skies.
Afar they built them on the forest side,
And saw the grass was green, found God, a truth;
They knew life stately as a goddess bride,
And lived the palace in the seer's booth.
Who heard thee, followed; for thy reed sang,
 "Think!
If Life be God, from death thou shalt not shrink!"

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

In storied Florence is a noble tomb,
Where lies a woman, called Elizabeth.
Long years ago she gave her harp to death—
Long since she left her Casa Guidi room.
I hear an echo from th' Italian gloom;
Lo, 'tis a voice I oft have yearned to hear!
A gentle form steals lightly from her bier
And now I know the grave a fabled doom!
'Tis thou—Madonna of the poets' Heaven!
Thou Joan of Song who heard St. Michael's voice
Thou Moon of Splendour in the lyric sky!
I take each note, thy deathless harp has given;
I make thy poet's dreams my lasting choice;
I hear thy singing—thou canst never die!

PAUL

I never kissed you, Paul; your arms' embrace
I never knew, though love spoke in your eyes.
I met you, years gone, under distant skies
And gave my soul to you a summer space.
Where are you now? What people, and what place
Live in your smile—your smile that was my sun!
Sad-eyed, alone, I think, when all is done
My dying heart shall pray to see your face!
Why did we love, and fear thereof to speak?
I have been loved since then—God spare the word—
But in my soul, Paul, you are Sacrament!
Oh would my spirit had the light to seek
Your spirit where no voice but God's is heard—
Then should we kiss, and know what true love
meant!

THE WATER LILY

Ah water lily on the stagnant pool,
What miracle art thou of God and Life?
What law of nature wed a spotless wife
And shaped thee 'mid these scenes, meet for a ghoul?
Who but a God could so ordain the rule
To bear thee, crystal gem of virgin worth?
Pure, dost thou rise from noisome depths, to birth
Whose wonder well rebukes the atheist fool!
Heredity has snapped its chain for thee;
Environment n'er carved thee, jewelled star—
Thy mission is to chide the cynic heart.
Not in our world thine excellence could be—
We men, who boast so high and fall so far.
We are but flesh—thine is an angel's part!

THE EMERALD

Mysterious emerald, emblem of the May—
The new-waked fields, the dainty fairy ring!
The fresh-robed trees where young birds mate and
sing
Of spring's warm birth, and summer's verdant day!
Did wild forms snatch you from the sea's tossed
spray?
Or did a dewdrop, sparkling diamond fair
Fall on the Fay-queen dancing in the air—
And seize the colour of her mantle's play?
Green eye of youth, you reign the fairest queen
Of precious gems, decked in their caprice blaze;
You gleam, a mirror, where a god might look!
But, best of all, you shine with nature's sheen;
You speak of moonlit nights, and long, clear days—
The turf's green breast, beside the murmuring
brook!

MAY EVE

This is the night when old dreams work their will!
Old memories of half-forgotten times
Will jingle light in thistle-breasted rhymes—
And thirsty fays will drink their beakers' fill!
No thing that loves the wood-life shall be still;
Each forest heart awakes to greet the May.
Shrill laughter wildly hails her smiling sway—
And tiny figures dance o'er mead and rill!
May Eve and Spring! The fairies' potent night!
The scattered exiles have their long year's wish—
They sing the runes of age-stored fairy lore!
The stars are songs, the moon a magic light!
Who drinks their wine, eats of the fairies' dish—
Remembers old lives, lived and died before!

TO THE SONNET

Come sound, come silence! Come, oh sonnet soul!
I want the rhythm of thy mark and pause!
I crave Effect, thou most exquisite Cause—
Thou Holiest, thou Elohim, thou Goal!
Speak, 'twixt thy lines! Sing of the dusky bole
Where fairies slumber till the shade of night!
Thy interludes shall make me dream aright—
I shall transcend the gray threads of my dole!
The thought thou bindest in thy close confine
Leads gently to the further paths of peace;
I wander, wander, till the world is nought!
The solemn pause that holds thee, line to line
Is unvoiced music, struggling for release;
Thou art perfection, in a vision wrought!

A MAY SHOWER

Wouldst thou obscure the May, thou playful shower,
Or dost thou think us weary of her charm?
Thou wouldst not do the dryad maiden harm—
Thou wouldst not rob us of one welcome flower!
Wouldst thou display the caprice of thy power,
Or art thou sporting with the field and wood?
Hast thou a measure of the sky's soft good
Whose hope inclines to brighten urn and bower?
Yea friend, we love thee! Thy light hand is soft—
Thy footsteps whisper only, and are gone;
Thine is a gift of diamond-crested dew!
Quick, thou art fled, and in the still wood-croft
A lone bird sings; and lo, the queenly swan
Glides through the waves, rejoicing in the blue!

THE CATHOLIC DEAD

A host of silent witnesses they lie
From pole to pole, the holy Catholic dead!
Wherever mankind breaks his humble bread—
Wherever mortal flesh must faint and die.
Strange hoar trees shade them, 'neath the Eastern
sky;
Fierce dawns burst o'er them, wondrous gold and
red;
Cold mountains yield them stones at feet and head—
The prairies bless them in a low-breathed sigh.
No land too Pagan for the conquering Cross—
And on the grave the Cross becomes the Crown!
No tongue too alien for the Requiem prayers.
Mirabile! The parent earth's emboss
Ornates the faithful dead with tender down—
Wherever man, and his appointment fares!

THE "CHAPPING" AT THE DOOR

*("I hear my father chapping at the door." J. M.
Barrie's Margaret Ogilvy.)*

I hear the Last Guest chapping at the door!
He comes by night across the unmarked snow.
How can I leave my fireside's warming glow,
And take the few steps on the home-sweet floor?
I look around and murmur, "Nevermore!"
The thread's spun out; the watchful cat's asleep;
The toilers rest; the night's at blackest deep—
Quick! I must glean my half-forgotten lore!
He comes but once, this Guest who sharply raps,
And sometime I must open—why not now?
But oh so sudden,—not one last good-bye!
But still He stands, and still his thin hand chaps;
No wood-leaf stirs; no breeze plays on the bough;
It seems a dream—the Messenger is nigh!

THE ANNUNCIATION

Wrapt in a dream of temple days She knelt;
The silence grown so loud, She raised Her eyes;
A trembling seemed to shake the cloudless skies—
A strange joy seized Her, never dreamed nor felt.
A flash of white seemed hovering on the floor;
It took an Angel's shape! And She recalled
The sweet-stern face, when She was temple walled—
Had outlined dimly near the fast-barred door.
But now he came in glory! And the power
Leaped in Her soul and shouted in Her heart!
A regal throne became Her maiden's bower—
She stood majestic in Her destined part!
Troubled in mind was She, but not afraid;
Thus Gabriel called Her—Mother, Queen and
Maid!

TO THE MUSE

Dear Muse, come back! I sit with head on hand;
But you have fled, I feel no answering thrill.
Have I strayed so far from the lover's land
That I may claim no recognition still?
Once love was mine—but what inspires now?
Old griefs and shadows have no tender voice.
Pain in my heart, the rue wreath on my brow—
Without your pity, how can I rejoice?
Come—give your soft touch to my cheek and hair!
Come—sing of woods and hidden fairy dells!
Tell where you bide that I may fly to seek!
Oh give me water from your crystal wells—
Inspire me with your cerulean air—
Behold me patient, sad, and wisely meek!

REBECCA WEST

(*Ibsen's Rosmersholm*)

The nights thy troubled spirit sought the path
That mounted o'er the mill-dam's maddening race!
And there beheld a drownéd woman's face
Transfixing thine with staring smile of wrath!
The pictures mocked thee, child of graceless Gath,
Till shadows shaped as hands of burning iron!
The simple fancies of the day's environ
Foreshadowed pennance of thy aftermath!
And he the man—unknowing, dreamer-wise,
But all unlearned in woman's sophistries—
Was god of wax, where marble were thy will!
Thy fate was written in the dead wife's eyes—
The White Horse rattled through the boding breeze,
And ere he visioned, waited grim and still!

THE FIRESIDE SPHINX

No house is home that lacks th' attendant cat,
The tiny tiger, savage, and demure;
The ruthless foe of bird, and dog, and rat—
Who glides with cushioned ease, alert and sure.
Behold the dainty Pussy's coy device,
Her grateful purr for household warmth and fire!
But, wonder, that wee beastie in a trice
Can splutter like a demon in her ire!
A heritage of mystery wraps her round—
Night and the devil claim her jungle heart;
In her volcanoes of infernal sound;
Shrewd diplomat, she scores in each strange part.
'Tis well, when surfeit gluts our history's page
To watch her eyes, untamed from age to age!

THY SIN

I

I thought how Gretchen at the spinning-wheel
Heard, in the dusk, the mocking devil's strain;
And when her sin through thinking, seemed unreal—
He woke her to the sharpness of her pain.
But hapless Gretchen never sat as I
And heard the twanging of the red guitar;
The links of loathsome music pierce the sky,
Whilst thou who earned the serenade art far!
If it were sin of mine, my heart should weep—
But 'tis thy sin that mocks the silent air!
My soul is tortured that thine own does sleep;
Thy conscience rests, but mine lives thy despair!
If it were sin of mine, my life should die;
But I must mourn for thee, who art a lie!

II

The Brocken broom and brack would ease me now!
The night's too black for God-redeeméd earth!
I'd have the Fiend's hot finger on my brow
And join the Harpies in unhallowed mirth!
Why do I stay with God, when thou hast lost
The God impress through carelessness of sin?
I would upon the waves of air be tossed
And bid the Sabbath spirits let me in!
I, who am bound to thee by endless chains
Of life and love, am weary with my prayers!
Would revel with the damnéd ease my pains—
Could I be lulled with discords unawares?
Oh sinful love return! These thoughts of hell
Will sound for me, as thee, the funeral knell!

III

Ask thou of God! Why ask me to forgive?
I who am flesh of thee have shared thy sin!
I will be with thee, while my life shall live,
And only know a Heaven thou canst win.
Canst thou unbind the circled band of Fate
From my left hand? Canst thou wipe off the kiss
Thou gavest me first? Too late, poor love, too late,
There was too much of soul, too much of bliss!
I, I condemn thee? I can only weep
To see thee kneeling, who should stand beside;
I shall go with thee to the Silent Sleep
Who faced the Altar as thine unspoiled bride.
Ask thou of God! And ask, my love, for me—
Our soul, our sin, that cleanséd they may be!

IV

The past is quick forgot, when Fate restores
The placid light; thy anguish proved thy soul
A tortured wanderer on those woodless shores
Where sin demands the conscience's breath for toll!
I have no fear to love thee; all is spring
In thee, in me, and in the garden's heart;
I ever crowned thee as my spirit's king
E'en when I walked for thee a lonely part.
The ash fades on thy brow; the sad scars heal
Where scourge of thy remorse dipped in thy blood.
Thy sin is dead! Our love, our life, is real
We have not perished in the devil's flood!
Come, let us walk the garden, breathe the sky!
God has forgiven, why, my love, not I?

MADAME BLAVATSKY

Woman, who played at Zeus in council-seat
On high Olympus; would-be thunder giver—
Feigning the sea, though but a brawling river—
In all things strong, in nothing sane or sweet!
Who traced the pathways for they wilful feet?
Where found thy soul its wit to guide the pen?
Was it an holy temple, or a den
Where uncouth monsters held their devils' meet?
In truth, thou wert a miracle of noise—
Albeit thou didst steal thy thunder's crash;
Although a river, thou couldst play the sea!
What time leaves of thee, what his will destroys—
A future age must read by lightning's flash;
Whate'er thou wert—some strange force voiced in
thee!

A KNOT OF CRAPE

A knot of crape tossed by the twilight winds
Hangs on this door; whose door I know not, yet
Herein I know, Death and his peers have met—
And God herein, His altar's worship finds.
The moon rides in the sky, and on the blinds
Closed, as to shut the heedless noises out—
Sheds night's young lustre; pausing on her route
To mock the trappings of poor mortal minds.
Peace, peace, within! God moves among ye, now—
Howe'er ye did deny Him, years ago!
No lore of man can heal the aching heart.
Thus find we God; one tracing on the brow
By Death, the Victor; one face, set and wan—
And life, one moment, stands with God apart.

THE DEAD MASTER

Oh could I hear you play as now you play,
Crowned master of the star-stringed violin!
Speak through the night, the moon is cold and thin—
Belovéd dead, for my dear sake obey!
Push by the straggling stars, and wing your way!
Your violin lies lifeless on my knees;
In my rude hand, the bow that sobbed of seas
And myrtle dells is mute as soulless clay!
I may not wrench one wailing chord of sound
To tell my grief and dumb despair for you!
Belovéd come, for God's Soul thrills you now!
Hush! In the misty darkness lowering round
A strain I hear, celestial deep and new!
Belovéd—was it you who kissed my brow?

THE DARK SISTERS

Pain and Sorrow—Grief and Death; these four
Dark sisters walk among us at their will.
We may not heed them, but their presence, still,
In silence speak the fatal “nevermore”.
Not only by the grass-grown marble door
Where love and life lie fast in dreamless sleep;
Not only when the last dim shadows creep
Their sweeping garments trail our spirit’s floor.
Beside the gates of pleasure, where we seek
Forgetfulness of gall and latter end—
The four will whisper “Love and life are brief!”
We cannot flee them, solemn-eyed and meek—
But we may greet them each as faithful friend—
And in their presence find a sweet relief.

THE FIRST OF MARCH

Blind February tore her hair in wrath—
And when we sought to do her homage, threw
Snow blankets o'er us; shrieking down time's path
She cursed and left us. March! The sky is blue!
No trace of February's angry frown—
March smiles among us with benignant eyes;
Wee buds, hard-gnarled, peep out on stems of
brown—
And o'er the landscape, haze of sun-joy lies.
Capricious March may pelt us with his sleet—
May slash the infant buds, his first day's gift;
But we are grateful, that his god-winged feet
Brought blue and gold, and hints of winter's lift.
Good Omen, Master March! A soft day's sun!
The ice-floes shake, the new life is begun!

THE "NIGGER"

Why rail at him? This "free land" is his "home"!
Now shout of "Spangled Banners", and the "brave"!
Our fathers' fathers branded him as slave—
We "generous" Saxons forced him o'er the foam.
He would be man—should he be ape or gnome,
Who, generations, heard us scorn his soul?
He has God's image, shall we make his mole?
He knows the light—must he endure the gloam?
He has his awful sins, this African—
He learned of those who prospered by his chains;
He spoils our women—as we long spoiled his!
Shall seas engulf him? He can walk—a man!
Say, can we drive him, who let slip the reins
By our own weakness? Act! He lives—he is!

REUBEN

Not his the envy of the nobler mind,
To trick his agéd father's failing sense;
Not his the hate to send his brother hence,
And give him bondman, to an alien kind.
His was no hand the iron goads to bind—
But his the lips to speak the soothing words.
His was the voice of gentle singing birds;
His eyes shed pity for his sire, blind.
Yet could his nature stoop to weak deceit—
Not his the courage to withstand the crowd;
The son of Isaac knew his eldest well.
When Reuben knelt before his father's feet—
In tones of grief, the Angel-marked avowed
"As water shifting—thou shalt not excel!"

A SEA SHELL

I hear the sea chant in this tiny shell—
A lowly child of its infinity;
I place it to my ear; it sings to me
Of merfolk sporting on the far tide's swell.
I hear the echo of the wailing knell
The drownéd chorus in the coral deeps;
I dream sea-children in their languid sleeps;
Grots I behold, where lovers, sea-tales, tell.
Thou hast thy shell, thou unconjectured main—
But what should be my echo, if I pass
To that long silence, where all sound is dead?
No anxious effort of my futile brain—
No thought in marble, no emboss in brass—
May live to mark the soul forever fled!

“EX MARIA VIRGINE”

(Et incarnatus de Spirituo Sancto, ex Maria Virgine et Homo factus est)

Thus Christ was born! Thus Truth was e'er decreed,

And ever thus shall incarnate! 'Tis She—
The Woman, who the means of grace must be;
'Tis She ordained to mate with God at need!
'Tis fixed as the earth must hide the seed
To bear the fruit and forest foliage;
'Tis She with wisdom, far above the sage
Whose soul can hark, and do God's Golden Deed!
And God, who chose the Maid of Galilee
As His Co-Worker in the destined plan
Has marked the Woman for His holy spouse!
Lo, forth She steps, when Christos is to be—
And God, o'erleaping lowly law and man—
For His fulfilling, makes Her soul His house!

OLD BOSTON STREETS

Old England left a silent heritage,
Although young Albion broke the parent tie.
The grave streets wear a solemn air and sage—
As though the English fathers still were nigh.
With wistful longings for the mother land,
Our forbears laid her mark on road and lane;
And e'en to-day, the staunch New England strand
Clasps hands in thought with her across the main.
The quaint-laid parks, the covert balconies
On tall, grim houses, fallen from their state—
Recall the decorous towns far o'er the seas;
The past still lives in echo, sign, and trait.
The couchant lion, garden-front, we see,
That might have coaxed a smile from Thackeray!

GEORGE ELIOT

I would not live thy life, strange woman—man,
No, not to write the wonder of thy lines!
Yet I revere the soul who knew the signs
Of life's long-serpent, trailing caravan.
The hieroglyphics of the cosmos' span
Thy shrewd mind traced, and set in marble rote;
I lodge the beam, in thy deep eye the mote—
I dare not judge thee; God, no creature, can!
But for thy future glory, would thy days
Had been a woman-wife's; thy soul was white,
And yet thy name must wear an unwashed blot.
A star so bright, oh pity, that the haze
Must dim the super-splendour of its light;
And we who love thee sigh—though we would not!

SPRING IN NEW ENGLAND

New England mine, the spring comes soon to thee—
Thou vestal matron, strongly stern and mild;
He comes to thee, reluctant as a child
Who fears correction at his mother's knee.
But thou art perfect in each bush and tree
When young May sits triumphant on her throne!
I would not fly from thee to lucent zone
Where languid violets wait the velvet bee!
Thy God-dreamed elms! The glory of thy hills!
Thy strong-veined rocks, thy grandeur-gloomy pines!
Truth is thy birthright—faith thy blood and bone!
Soon shall I wander mid slow-dropping rills—
And seek, in each shy nook, thy summer wines—
Dear my New England, God's land, and mine own!

ROSE GERANIUM

Art thou the daughter of the wild pink rose
Who heard the wooing of the rough west wind,
And thought her wood the graveyard of the blind
Where dull trees slept in colourless repose?
She followed from the deep wood's sheltered close
And nestled in her lover's wilful arms;
Alas, the brigand wearied of her charms
And tossed her where the tall geranium grows!
Thou, dainty mignon, art the tender child
Of second love, born in the garden bed;
The tall geranium won the sad-eyed rose.
But, like thy mother, thou art pink and wild,
Thou wert conceived when she with sorrow bled;
Thou art a-quiver, when the west wind blows!

NANCE O'NEIL

Some pagan goddess come to earth again
To learn new laws, and practice half-forgot
Long-vanished rites of her immortal lot;
Peace in her sleep, but in her waking, pain.
The jungle moons, the haunts where beasts have
lain

Her still eyes speak; a priestess muttering charms,
With streaming hair, and wild, distended arms—
Then shrieking in a fierce exultant strain!
Thus seems this woman, who adorns an art
Whose many vestals boast a sorry few—
To brave like her, the lightnings of the gods!
Half-slumbering Egypt stirs her stranger heart;
The gloom of life has crowned her with its rue;
Her soul has known the welt of many rods!

SUNRISE IN THE CITY'S HEART

Grim, monster buildings, sombre and uncouth,
Glow with a tardy smile of kindly will;
The sunrise gives a touch of long-dead youth,
They blandly beam, while yet the streets are still.
Now hear the hurrying feet! The rest of night
Seems but a moment, idly breathed and passed;
The lust of toil is present with the light—
Each face is tainted with harsh labour's mask.
The many haste-unmindful of the sun;
The few sniff breezes from the distant sea;
One soul hears woodland waters leap and run,
And craves a long day on the wind-kissed lea.
The sun is strong; his call is strife and care;
But hush! He whispers, "Children, work is prayer!"

SUNSET IN THE CITY'S HEART

Now daylight dies, and welcome peace descends;
Somewhere beyond, the sea smiles to the sun.
The soft winds stir, the breezes kiss as friends;
The workers breathe—the round of toil is run!
The drowsy buildings gravely sink to sleep;
The last, faint rays hail twilight in the west;
But, in the eaves, the gossip sparrows peep,
Above the street these Arabs make their nest.
'Tis almost dark—but see, a red flower leans
Against the gray stone of yon window-ledge!
A brave field-lily, one of nature's weans,
Plucked from her nook beside the rambling hedge!
The sun's last kiss is her's; he gives her dreams
Of quiet pastures, woods, and pleasant streams.

MY GRANDMOTHER

Thou, whom I loved on earth, so long art dead
That I may ask thee of the God of love!
What is the true tale of the world above?
Hast thou found youth, whose soul through space
 hath fled?
Dost wear the silver on thy saintly head,
Or art thou radiant with thy girlhood's grace?
Wilt thou be there, with thy familiar face
When I before the King, am doubting led?
Come not to me in strange angelic guise!
Thou art the one friend I may hope to greet;
Come, free from pain, but as I knew thee—old!
I weary for the long flight to the skies;
Give me the light to guide me to thy feet;
Bid me fly to thee—I am tired and cold!

MEIN SCHWESTER

Would I were Wordsworth, sister Dorothy!
Thou hast her heart, though I have nought in him;
His flame was high, and mine is small and dim;
A bondman I, whilst he was sovereign free!
That which I do, I do for love of thee;
I wander oft on sorrow's doubtful track;
But ever thy low voice hath called me back—
An angel guardian, thou hast been to me!
I hope all-love will crown thy wisdom's day;
I know thy orchard lined with fruitful trees—
I dream the faith that lights thy patient eyes;
For thy fond sake, I give the Muse her sway—
And trust her guiding o'er unbounded seas—
Content in darkness, till the sun shall rise!

IN AN OLD ALBUM

Fair, fresh young girl—fair, fresh, spite time!
I find you mouldering in this album's tomb;
I wipe away the dust of time's old gloom—
And lo, your face, as sweet as scented thyme!
Fair miss of Yesterday, take this, my rhyme—
Then sleep as Brynhild, beautiful for aye;
I would not smile at your dead bloom of May—
Death rings for all the sad notes of his chime.
What matters antique garment, if the face
Be bright and artless as a rose in June?
Maid, you were young, and you are ever young!
Time slew you; but this relic of your grace
He left as echo of a master tune
Sung by a gentle voice in alien tongue.

THE ROMANY GIRL

Her piercing eyes recall the earth's new dawn;
She walks the hard streets with a woodland tread;
Her hair is black, her skin a satin tawn;
Her bosom's instinct serves her heart and head.
"Poor creature!" sigh the women, caged and
 housed—

And sheltered as the twittering yellow birds;
The gypsy maid with free life is espoused;
She hears the brooks, her spirit fits the words!
Are cold and hunger not the least of ills,
When young moons set the gypsy's blood aflame?
The gypsy's feet have topped the highest hills,
And somewhere deep she speaks the Father's name!
Ye tame canaries, pale slips of the town—
Know ye the soul burned in her eyes of brown?

THE ARCHANGEL RAPHAEL

He comes to me in secret! As he came
To pure Tobias in the olden days!
He comes—a Presence, set mid golden rays—
The Angel, radiant with the healer's fame!
I, weak, most sinful, breathe his holy name—
And at the death of day his splendour comes!
The grief of life, my faltering soul benumbs—
But silence brings him wreathed in oriflame!
Such is our God—the God of such as I—
That greatest of His host wing through the skies
To serve the heart-need of the humble least.
Thus Raphael, when sunset burns its dye
To my low dwelling with contentment flies;
He shares my fast, my solitary feast!

THE CITY OF THE DEAD

A long, unbroken silence wraps it round ;
Lethæan seas lap on its ancient rocks ;
No need of bars, no need of chamber locks—
The boldest foot shrinks from this holy ground.
Slowly a boat appears, but wakes no sound ;
Twain forms within ; a muffled figure stands—
His cold face hidden in his trembling hands—
The keen-eyed boatman scans the wall's high bound.
The black gates straight unclosed ; with mirthless
smile

The boatman dips his oar ; with noiseless rush
They pass within the city—one, for aye !
No mortal knows the long, unreckoned mile—
The boatman rows the soul mid endless hush ;
None in the city wake as they sweep by !

SCENTS AND SOUNDS

The world of scents and sounds is with me now!
The crisp young grass would kiss me as I roam!
The budding wood's my bed, the field's my home;
The hawthorn becks me, eager to endow
Its perfumed glory on my cheek and brow;
By moon and star, in sun and shade, the same—
The votaries of nature shout spring's name;
The playful breezes riot on the bough!
Sounds! From the birds, the air, the brooks, the
trees!
Scents! Everywhere from rose to parsley bed!
Love! Where the cresses wait the waters' kiss!
What hinders me to wander with the breeze?
Speak, heart, and drown the dull voice of the head—
Let me be one with Nature in her bliss!

LAURENCE HOPE

Lo, mid the grays of mist, a crimson flash
Burst in its fullness from the Indian prime!
The Orient's impulse, rebel, fierce, and rash
Swept on her harp, thorn-tuned by passion's time!
So much of pain! Such wailing of despair!
So little of the joy that cools the brow!
Ah what avails to stir the surcharged air
If heart and soul to sleeping Fate must bow?
Oh spirit of the flower-laden East,
Who lived and died by boding love's decree—
Why did thy gods foretell of best and least?
What did thy quest of Kama mete to thee?
We hold the velvet petals of thy rose;
Thy being's shrift, oh passion-tossed, who knows?

LOVE AND SPRING

I

Art thou a traitor, Spring? Why am I cold—
A pensive wanderer in thy fairest ways?
I was so warm, so passion-swept of old,
As noisy brook that through the dark wood strays!
I seem a shadow, when young life is free;
Thy sweet charms are for asking—God is true;
The joy of many wakes no chord in me,
I find my pleasures with the sombre few.
The lilacs whisper of immortal years
When love called gods to burn as forest-men;
I have forgot the heart-throbs, and the tears,
That stirred my bosom when I heard the wren!
I walk serene—Spring, is this happiness—
Calm in my soul, no love-sin to confess?

II

Is there one hand that could grow warm to mine?
Oh who will burn these lips so long a-cold?
Could old love press its draught of spicy wine?
Could dead suns rise to life in pearl and gold?
My dead love's face—shall it again be mine,
Or does a new love wait to crown my days?
Must I be lonely by the sea's long line—
And tread in silence through the forest ways?
My hair is hidden 'neath my hood of gray;
Yet love caressed it, when my youth was new;
Am I too autumn-worn for fields of May—
My cheek is red, my eye is still lake-blue!
My garments brush the pine-cones in the path—
Could I brave love again—its pain and wrath?

III

My days of love are perished! Long these lips
Have lain as dead to mellow kiss of love!
But now the bee among the woodbine sips
His glad heart's fill; the happy-mated dove
Coos to the wind her nest-song of delight—
I see young lovers in the twilight dales;
Am I the witch who reigned a love-mad night,
And tore from wisdom's hills to passion's vales?
I am but fit for droning prayers and beads—
What nun so humble, meek and chaste, as I?
I may not sow in spring my luscious seeds—
I've lost the gleam that sparkled in my eye!
I have forgot my rood; love worked his will—
And left me frozen, as the dead grave-still!

A DEAD CHILD

Heap frail arbutus for this child of May,
Who knows of Heaven ere she learned of life;
Who n'er shall be a lissome maid or wife;
Her sunset followed on her dawn of day.
Anemones, narcissus blooms, we lay
On her white couch, the earliest gifts of spring;
Meet symbols of her hour's brief opening—
Close in her hands that she may keep alway.
So much of happy promise here is dead—
The unborn dreams of wistful womankind—
The soul that whispered of its pristine worth.
Why echo trite words that her life is sped?
Why pierce the mists with eyes, by grave-dust blind?
Praise we the Lord who spared her sin and dearth!

POET AND KING

I

Nay cease to plead! Thou art the great of earth
By rank, by honour, and by destiny;
Thou givest me homage, that my May-time birth
Gave me the Muse to breathe divinity.
If thou art great, and I am poet, born,
And life's decree has marked us each for each—
Would we had met at hush of early morn
Ere time had swept the velvet from the peach!
I bear the wedding-ring; thou hast a crown;
And though we love, we may not jest with God.
I will not brave the wrath of honour's frown,
But bid thee stand, and kiss the fated rod.
Oh plead no more! We are not Scroll and Cause;
Poets and kings need most man's stern-writ laws!

II

I count that love a lie that lightly holds
Its wedded honour as a paltry thing!
So, gaze no more, man of the ermine folds;
Thou art but man though fate hath dubbed thee
king!

Bethink thee, nuptial laws thy lips disdain
Have rooted them so deep in mankind's sod—
That conscience tells me, spite my longing pain
They were ordained in Eden-times of God!
I will not fight with God; we may not lave
Our guilty hands as Pilate vainly strove.
I will be thine beyond the lawless grave,
But in this life my soul shall mete my love!
I say I love thee! Take thy sceptre—go!
Art thou not more than God and honour? No!

THE TWO STATUES

Anear old Florence lies an ancient wood—
Once theatre for Bacchus' maddened praise;
And there a sculptor, in old Pagan days—
Imaged the wine-god in a lustful mood.
But, strange companion, in Her cedar hood
The Virgin stands beside him tender mark
Of Christendom, while yet the world was dark,
And men but dimly knew the Christ-law good.
The vine-crowned scoffs, though stains of untold
years
Deface his visage, as with grim intent;
He fain would spit at Her, but dares he not!
Before Her likeness, men with griefs and fears
Have given sorrow all its blessed vent,
And gone, contented, with life's varied lot.

THE DECADENT POETS

These be great men! If it be great to choose
To wander through a drowsing orchard, sweet
With nectared fruits! If it be wise to lose
The soul through richness rotting at the feet!
These be true men! If those be true who crave
Old Pan unveiled in all his naked shame!
These be wise men, who mock the Christian's
grave—

With atheist doubts and coxcomb-mincéd blame!
These be just men! If it be just to fire
The dreams of youth with fancies meet for death!
If it be god-like weaklings to inspire—
Then are these gods of Sodom and of Heth!
True, God is stern, but these would bow the knee
To Lesbian hymns and sick-hued phantasy!

LILACS

Oh lilacs you must fade! It needs must be
That all things lovely flourish but to die!
Whene'er your clusters shower over me,
In pure delight I cannot pass you by.
I know you will not grieve, if I partake
Of your soft fragrance; you must die betimes—
And, for the goodness of the summer's sake
I weave you thus within my ventured rhymes.
The Indies gave you in the long ago
As they have given all of worth and thought.
You whisper of that matrix land; I know
In western soils a miracle you wrought.
You brought the rich East to the infant West
And in your perfume, gave the Orient's best!

THE IMMORTAL

The odours of the lilac, delicate—
The myriad blossoms of the wood and field—
All bells, whose hearts a mystic fragrance yield—
Die, but to echo in a higher fate.
In Heaven shall be known the thousand scents
We knew on earth, besides the garden gate.
Love's sense shall tell us, while we humbly wait—
Where sweet familiars shed their recompense.
The spicy box, the warm breath of the pine
Shall ease our spirits fainting with the light;
The violets shall stretch in endless line
To rest the new pain of our dazzled sight.
Forget-me-nots and roses shall beguile
Our souls, ashamed to meet the Father's smile!

HIS MOTHER

I shared your fast; I vanish at your feast;
I drank your tears; I wish no beak of wine.
I was your solace in your unsunned years,
And all your youth's high visions, I made mine.
Now let me go! The world gives its acclaim;
I am a sower for the shrouds of death;
Let new friends clash the goblet to your name;
I gave your fame-child first its meed of breath.
When warm fires die, and new friends wane as
moons—

My foot shall cross your portals as of old;
My hand shall link the old familiar tunes—
And smooth the gray, as once I smoothed the gold.
I make your glory mine; I carved your place.
You saw your fame, writ in your mother's face!

THE HOMELY HEARTH

What in this world is like the homely hearth?
Plough through white fields pursued by purring cold;
Push by the door, where ice-dips hang their scarf,
And leave thy gray thoughts on the gloomy wold.
The good wife spins before the snapping fire;
The snowy linen reels in graceful glide.
The shrill hens gossip in th' adjacent byre;
The starling whistles on the window-side.
Sit thou and dream! Behold the stately cat
Completes the picture of the cottage home.
Now hear outside the goodman stamp the mat—
The goodwife coos her ewe-lamb, "Father's come!"
So let old England keep the cottage fire—
And not for her the death on ruin's pyre!

MARY STUART

Poor hapless Queen, whose tears were never dried,
But flowed in rivers through the bed of years!
If ever pity solaced those who died
Some saintly breast allayed your anguished fears!
So much a woman, that the Queen was lost
When southern minstrels warbled of the dance;
Sweet fair, whose wavering heart was thistle tossed
And brought duir Scotland charm of mellow France.
Your country knew you not, nor did you know
A pompous people's rough and sullen ways;
Your white hand gave its warmth to treacherous
foe—

Your beauty's trust misguided all your days.
A martyr in your life, saint in your death;
Poor lamb foredoomed for wolf Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH TUDOR

The paltry woman, and the mighty Queen!
The deadly foe of Scotland's sad Marie;
Your soured heart glowed with a livid green—
Your soul was bitter as the turbid sea.
What majesty of head, what dignity
Of scholar's mind, and statesman's lofty skill!
What petty foment of your woman's will—
What restlessness of savage vanity!
Thus history gives you grateful tribute due
For those sure acts that showed the sovereign's
 heart—
But think in silence, what would hiss, if said.
To England loyal, to yourself untrue—
The times unborn forgive the erring part,
And say the Muses crowned your royal head.

THE VOICE OF SEX

I

You do not love me! 'Tis the voice of sex
That urges you, despite my frown, to me;
Not yours to win me; you may not perplex
My woman's wisdom with your sophistry.
Strip me of moonlight, silence, and lagoon—
The secret perfume of my tinted hair,
And that, you call your love, would vanish soon—
And die as thin smoke in the heedless air.
You love my charm, the rustle of my gown—
My head's proud toss, the music of my words;
You may not move me; yours is not the crown
That I would wear, as song-light binds the birds.
True, you are man, and I am woman. Cease!
Yours is no love to lead life into peace!

II

You say you love me! Man, you do not know
The simple meaning of the word you speak!
"My eyes—my voice—my manner,"—be it so!
Well said, my lord, but further you must seek.
A master you—but n'er in ought of mine;
A loving suitor, honey on your tongue.
I wish no spiced libation of your wine—
Recall the shimmering net your heart has flung!
What know you of my soul, or of your own?
Can you find God with me? You stand amazed!
I, I be yours? A hill mid vales alone?
Should I live by your side, with silence crazed?
Ask of those women who would hark your voice;
I cannot, will not, be your bridal choice!



III

Must I be round with you? You will not take
My woman's "No!" as answer of my heart?
Well then, I cast a sharp stone in your lake,
And may its ripple flash my spirit's part!
I tell you, ask those women who would smile
With flattered instinct, that Narcissus man
Had honoured them, and thought them well worth
while
For chief delight in his rich caravan!
Your heart is proud! Your soul-light is untrue!
I tell you I would shrink from your caress;
I pray for love—but not, my lord, from you!
You wish a slave for passion's respite—yes!
Man, I am proud! His wife I would not be
Nor stoop to him, who deems he stoops to me!

“IN THAT OLD ANCIENT TIME”

In that old ancient time, before the rose
Had harked the wooing of the nightingale—
And endless winter held the land in mail—
Mid silence of the ice enshrouded floes;
Had Beauty then the witness now she knows
Hid in the womb of verdure unbegot?
Eternal Beauty! Never she was not;
Somewhere she sighed, obscured by sullen glows!
The rose, perchance, lay half-designed in stone;
A reptile mammal cloaked the nightingale—
When Beauty held the Alpha of her reign.
The ice-fields snapped; a trembling, southern zone
Crept out in green, beneath a dawn, all pale
With joyful pallour and the flush of pain!

A DAY IN SPRING

My lyre long weeks was mute; but this fair day
When, in my garden, green things rise in haste—
And leap and push to grow abreast with May,
In eager zeal to mend for winter's waste—
I dream of love, and tune my lyre again,
And mingle love-chords with my garden song.
'Tis as a ghost, who countless years has lain
In grave clothes rising mid the quickening throng.
A few chords left! A few remembered! Some
Are mute forever! I but sang for one,
And he is dead. I wonder, could he come
To hark my singing 'neath the spring's new sun?
I think the miracle would strike my lyre
To sound each note as silver molten fire!

“WHEN IN THE SILENCE OF THY LAST
DESPAIR”

When in the silence of thy last despair,
Thy soul reviews the path so long she trod—
And dreads the awful thought, alone with God!
Wilt thou of love and me then be aware?
Shall Death be burden, thou alone must bear?
Thou wilt recall my kiss was warm and kind;
My eyes to fault and sin, for thee were blind;
Shall not my weeping charm thy troubled air?
I beg thee, breathe my name, and I shall hear!
I bid thee speak of love, and love shall plead!
Thou hast no place, but I shall be anear.
Remember me—and God shall pardon all!
My love shall serve thee in thy hour of need—
God will forgive, if thou dost heed and call!

THE LONE HOLLOW

Here is the hollow close beside the road ;
Three harpy trees extend their skinny arms.
Flat, sullen stones,—oh what a meet abode
Where Afrite shapes might breed their baneful
 charms!

Macbeth's three witches, seem these sneering trees—
This mournful wind might be their muttered spell.
E'en in the summer, shunned by errant breeze,
They can but rasp the loathsome words of hell!
Now in the winter thaw, the noisome pool
Clings at their roots; the autumn's refuse leaves
Sulk, e'en in death. High nature's forest school
Fly from these mongrels—here no bird's voice
 grieves.

Yet is there grim attraction in the spot;
The witch-trees chuckle, gloating o'er their lot.

PAGANINI'S VIOLIN

This was his medium, this dumb-souled thing—
And this, his bow; what are they in my hands?
Can I link harmony from these four bands?
Yet he ruled Heaven, with one tiny string!
The wind at sea; the light bird on the wing,
The kiss of lovers, spake, when he decreed.
And this—the instrument! The fated need
When he, creator, chose of spheres to sing!
What fathoms here, of that unknown beyond
We term the Fourth Dimension? Was there blend
Of conscious soul in this mere box, with him
The All-Musician? Was there compact bond
Between the twain, the friend that served the friend?
Or was this flesh of him—the blood and limb?

TO MY MOTHER

Nor ode nor epic could I write to thee;
Thou, who art first and best of all on earth;
Who gavest me spirit, as thou gavest birth,
And cradled flesh, with hid divinity.
No word of mine, no tribute given by me
Can half explain the nearness of our tie.
When rocks are dust, and ocean beds are dry—
May God reveal the mother-mystery!
So, mother mine, accept these fourteen lines
With all my lore, and all my love deep hidden;
The years must live, what I would speak, and fail.
Mother and child, by rainbow-promised sign
Are one in love, as when the Angel, bidden
Brought long ago, the message, "Mother—Hail!"

TO AN OLD POET, WHO FEARS DEATH

You talk of winter; dread the snow of death;
But look, has one leaf left its parent tree?
Your fields are rich with autumn's kindly breath
And green pines line your pathway to the sea.
Your orchard sweep is ripe with mellow fruit;
You walk mid Indian summer's purple haze.
No voice you love can be forever mute—
Lo Moses' strength shall crown your length of days!
What of the winter, shall it slay the spring?
Shall one small blossom fail its promised bloom?
Love weds you with its golden marriage ring,
Nor will it flee you in the narrow room!
As Fate and Love are God, so live and trust;
No singer dies, no poet turns to dust!

FATHER

If I pass from thee, who hast toiled for me
With sweat on brow, and dull pain in the heart—
Think not I shall forget thy faithful part—
No world, no death, can tear my soul from thee!
I hear faint voices call across the sea,
And I may vanish from thy sight and reach;
So will I leave thee this brief glimpse of speech,
And bid thee hold it, as a memory.
Could I forget thee in celestial spheres—
Who cost thee many a grief, and many a sigh?
I have a love for thee no words could paint!
I shall remember all the loving years
Tho gavest me beneath the earth's gray sky;
I love thee, father, man, and warrior saint!

AN OLD TOILER

Dear, work-worn hands! Would I could kiss the
signs

Of patient toil from those soul harbingers!
Would I could tear from you the stinging burrs
That fall within your garden's autumn fines!
Were it my lot to swift unwrite the line
The mirk of years has pencilled on your brow!
Oh weary heart, would some kind fate endow
Your slender hoard with all Golconda's mines!
Kind eyes, before you close, may gentlest peace
Give you the lustrum of earth's silken ease!
May you go softly all your latter years!
Too brave to halt, and ask for death's release
I pray God send you summer's tranquil breeze—
An angel host to wipe away your tears!



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